Poll finds young adults much more tolerant on homosexual issues

LOS ANGELES TIMES

Gays and lesbians have experienced a dramatic rise in acceptance during the past two decades, a Los Angeles Times Poll published today indicates.

Almost seven in 10 Americans know someone who is gay or lesbian and say they would not be troubled if their elementary school-age child had a homosexual teacher. Six in 10 say they are sympathetic to the gay community.

On questions ranging from job discrimination to adoption to whether homosexuality is morally wrong, responses indicate that as gays and lesbians have become more open, heterosexuals have become more open toward them.

The change has come within one generation. In two Times polls during the mid-1980s and other data from the same era, the level of sympathy toward gays and lesbians was half what it is today.

"The stigma of being gay is disappearing," said Gary Gates, a demographer at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C.

That 69 percent of those polled by The Times said they know a gay or lesbian — up from 46 percent in 1985 — is particularly significant, Gates said. "Being gay is no longer an abstraction. It's my friend, my neighbor, my brother, my office-mate."

The Times Poll showed that women tended to be slightly more sympathetic toward gays and lesbians than men, and the survey affirmed a polarization that puts liberals and conservatives at opposite ends of a broad spectrum.

The poll also found a profound gulf in attitudes between older and younger Americans. Compared with those older than 65, respondents between 18 and 29 were so much more favorably disposed toward gays and lesbians that, Gates said, over time, "Many of these issues are simply not going to be issues any longer."

Resistance remains in some areas.

A slim majority of people surveyed opposed same-sex marriage. Yet the nationwide survey showed that regardless of their feelings about the subject, 59 percent of respondents think legal recognition of marriage for same-sex couples is inevitable.

THE SURVEY

The Los Angeles Times Poll surveyed 1,616 adults nationwide March 27 to 30. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3 percentage points.

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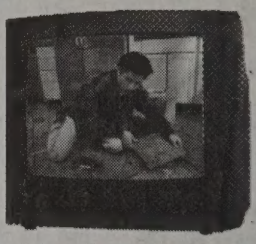
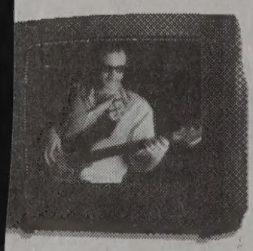
Foreign Relations Committee, Paula DeSutter, an assistant secretary of state, testified that Libya had declared in principle that it will restrict itself to missiles with a range that complies with an international standard.

Neither Libya nor the United States has disclosed how many Scud-B missiles Libya bought from Moscow, but officials said Libya's stockpile contained several hundred of them.





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